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What is the Syntax of Finnish Serial Verbs?

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What is the syntax of Finnish **serial verbs**?

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FUSAC 2012

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- I Serial Verb construction (SVC): the issues
- II Reminder: Finnish has SVC
- III The SVC data corpus
- IV Language specific properties of SVC
- V SVC as an alternative to V-V compounding
- VI V_1 as aspectual head
- VII Conclusions & further questions

Roadmap

I Serial verb construction: the issues

{ Agreement to disagree

The vagueness of definition & the diversity of data:

“Serial verbs are so called because they, or at least the primary examples of them, involve verbs in series”

Zwicky 1990:2

“Serial verb constructions are grammatical technique covering a wide variety of meanings and functions”

Aikhenvald 2006:2

Status quo in the theoretical camp: “There is no one serialization parameter that everyone agrees upon, even within the same school of thought”

Newmayer 2004:15 contra Stewart 2001

II Reminder:

Finnish has SVC

{ Morpho-syntactic criteria

- a. Lintu laula-a helkyttel-i
bird sing-inf IdPh-past.3sg
'The bird sang like a small bell'
- b. *Lintu laulo-i helkytel-lä
bird sing-past.3sg IdPh-inf
- c. Lintu laulo-i
bird sing-past.3sg
'The bird sang'
- d. Lintu helkyttel-i
bird IdPh-past.3sg
'The bird tinkled like a small bell'

a. Kosija **istu-a** **jurotta-a** nurka-ssa

suitor **sit-inf** **IdPh-** **pres3sg** corner-ine

“The suitor sits in the corner withdrawn, silent,
unapproachable”

b. Varis **lentä-ä** **kahnust-i** piha-n ylitte

crow **fly-inf** **IdPh-past.3sg** yard-gen over

‘The crow flew slowly over the yard’

Jarva 2003:76

Our focus:

manner of **motion SVC** & **lack of motion SVC**

	One Subj	One Obj	One T	One Asp	One Neg	Co- ord	Sub- ord	Pause
SVC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
VV	varies	varies	varies	varies	varies	✓	✓	✓

8

Finnish SVC: cross-linguistic properties

Myusken & Venstra 2006

III Data corpus

{ The scope

Collected manually from following sources:

- 42 from a discussion-elicitation session with a group of native Finnish speakers
- 262 from the electronic version of *Kielitoimiston sanakirja* (2007, The Dictionary of the [Finnish] Language Office);
- 81 tokens from of *Nykysuomen sanakirja* (1996, Dictionary of Modern Finnish)
- 4 from the Finnish online grammar *Iso Suomen Kielioppi* (2004)
- 80 from literary works of fiction
- 70 from blogs, web forums, YouTube...etc

No ei-kö-pä tuo ol-is saatta-nu men-nä
well not-Q-emp that be-cond may-past.prc go-inf
luikahutto-o.
IdPh-inf

'Well, it [bus] might have snuck by' (said in a skit)

Suolatut Elimet - Ismo kuol-la kupsahta-a
Salted Organs - Ismo die-inf IdPh-pres.3sg
'Salted Organs – Ismo falls down dead' (title of clip)

... Kristo laula-a lurautta-a kaunii-n laulu-n
Kristo sing-inf IdPh-pres.3sg beautiful-acc song-acc
'Kristo goes and sings a beautiful song' (title of clip)

Nyt, lukkari-Jutte, minä katso-a mulauta-n
now canthor-Jutte I look-ta.inf IdPh-pres.1sg

puolees, sentähden anna paukku-a.
toward-2sg.poss therefore let IdPh-ta.inf

'Now, Canthor-Jutte, I will glance angrily at you, so let blow'

...poja-t laula-a laskettel-i-vat ja muori-n
boy-pl sing-ta.inf IdPh-past-3pl and old.woman-gen

tyttäre-t naura-a rikostel-i-vat.

daughter-pl laugh-ta.inf IdPh-past-3pl

'...the boys were singing loudly, and the girls were giggling'

Aleksis Kivi 1870:217

Diachronic examples

→ Our data shows that SVC

- (i) is productively used in modern Finnish;
- (ii) is found in semi-formal & informal registers
- (iii) is also found diachronically, in abundance

The language properties of SVC

{ Properties particular to Finnish

property	ideophonic V	non-ideophonic V
sound	✓	✗
semantic elasticity	✓	✗
Vii position in SVC	✓	✗

a. Pari elä-ä jumputta-a päivä-n kerrallaan
pair live-inf IdPh- pres.3sg day-acc at.a.time
'The pair is living a day at a time, i.e. the days thump by at a regular rhythm'

b. Kone käy-dä jumputta-a hiljaksen
machine work-inf IdPh- pres.3sg slowly
'The machine is working relatively quietly, with a regular thumping rhythm'

c. Lapsi juos-ta jumputta-a piha-n poikki
child run-inf IdPh- pres.3sg yard-gen across
'The child runs across the yard at a steady beat'

Finnish SVC:
language specific properties.
Semantic elasticity of ideophonic V

- a. *Pari käy-dä jumputta-a päivä-n kerrallaan
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'The child runs across the yard at a steady beat'

Finnish SVC:
language specific properties.
Lack of semantic elasticity of non-
ideophonic V

- Vowel ö appears unusually frequently in ideophones
~80% of the Kihtelysvaara dictionary words beginning with ö or Cö

- Ideophone specific CC clusters

Possible clusters: [fl-], [fr-], [kl-], [kn-], [kr-], [pl-], [pr-], [sl-], [sm-], [sn-], [sp-], [sr-], [st-], [sv-].

Only 4 of appear in ideophones: [kl-], [kr-], [pl-], [pr]

- Ideophones meaning is not affected by a change in sound

löyhöttää = löyhyttää = leyhyttää = leyhytellä = leuhuttaa = leuhottaa

- Such variation is not normally permitted in Finnish:

mökkii 'hut' and *mykkii* '(the) dumb (ones)' etc

Finnish SVC:

language specific properties.

The sounds of ideophonic V Mikone (2001), Jarva (2008)

V_1 as Aktionsart head

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Merge of quazi-functional V varies crosslinguistically

clausal adverbs > adjuncts > external arg > internal arg

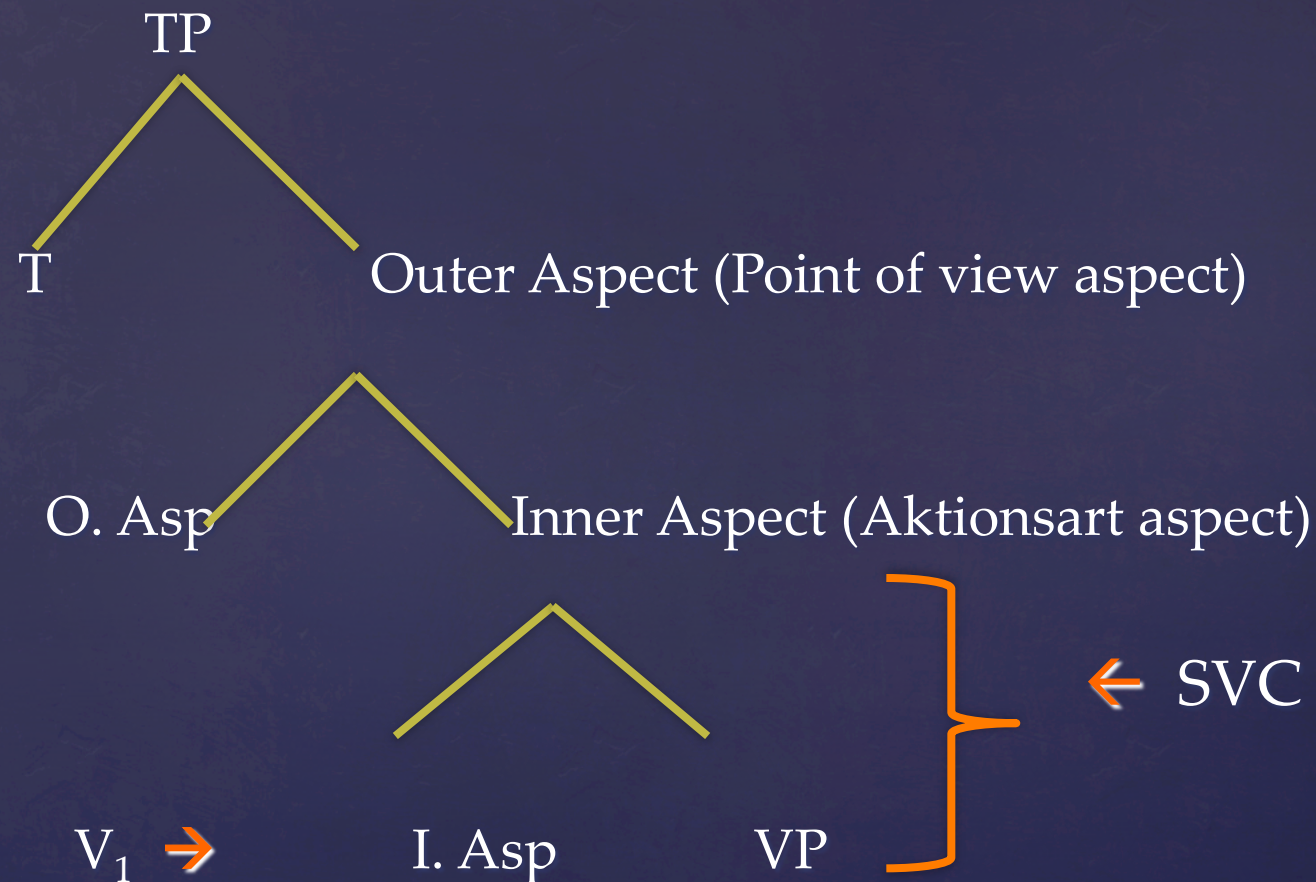
Marsalese	English	English	Swedish
...	<i>'go and buy'</i>	<i>'go buy'</i>	...

Assumptions

Cardinaletti & Gusti 2001

[[Inner Aspect... [VP]]





Proposal: aspect slot for V₁

Evidence

{ SVC = [[Inner Aspect.... [VP]]

Kurkiperhe ...käve-llä retosta-a jälkeläis-i-ne-en näytillä.
crane.family walk-ta.inf IdPh-3sg offspring-pl-3poss display-ade
'The crane family is walking proudly showing off its offspring'

Yläluokka elä-ä retost-i omi-ssa maailmo-i-ssa-an ...
upper.class live-ta.inf IdPh-past.3sg own-ine world-pl-ine-3poss
'The upper class lived showily in its own world (and spent the state's money...)'

Aktionsart correlates with V_1

...voi-mme-han aina otta-a saate-tta-va-n can-1pl-emp
always take-ta.inf support-passive-pres.participle-acc
ola-lle ja juos-ta täräyttä-ä sen 300m
shoulder-all and run-ta.inf IdPh-ta.inf that 300 meters
'We can always grab the portable (gun) on our shoulders and
dash those 300 meters'

Veikko iske-ä täräytt-i pallo-a.
Veikko hit-ta.inf IdPh-past.3sg ball-part
'Veikko smashed the ball'

Aktionsart correlates with V_1

- Is it a problem that infinitive is on Aktionsart head?
- No: root-root verb compounds are not attested in Finnish

***Puhalta** + **kuivas**-i-n hiukse-ni
 blow + dry-past-1sg hair-1sg.poss
 'I blowdried my hair'

***Sekoitta** + **paista** ainekse-t.
 stir + fry.imperative ingredient-pl
 'Stir-fry the ingredients'

* Veikko **iske** + **täräytt**-i pallo-a.
 Veikko hit + IdPh-past.3sg ball-part
 'Veikko smashed the ball'

Apparent problem #1:
why infinitive?

- Thus, the infinitive is the simplest citation form available
- Prediction: no other infinitival form will be allowed inside SVC

Seppä tako-a kalskutta-a.(ta-infinitive)
 black.smith hammer-ta.inf IdPh-3sg

‘The blacksmith is clanging’

*Seppä tako-ma kalskutta-a. (*ma-infinitive)

*Seppä tako-e kalskutta-a. (*de-infinitive)

Apparent problem #1:
 infinitive?

- An event V_1 modifies a descriptive V_2
- Why V_2 is not an Adv modifying V_1 , like in other constructions?

Kissa hiipi-i hiljaise-sti.

cat tiptoe-past.3sg quiet-ly

‘The cat tiptoes quietly’

Apparent problem #2: why
 $V_2 \neq$ adverb?

- One cannot derive adverbs from ideophones

Kissa hiipi-ä hipsutta-a.

cat tiptoe-past.3sg IdPh-3sg

‘The cat tiptoes quietly’

*Kissa hiipi-ä hipsutta-sti.

cat tiptoe-past.3sg IdPh-ly

‘The cat tiptoes quietly’

Apparent problem #2: why
V2 ≠ adverb?

(a) *hipsutta-sti / *hipsu-sti

IdPh-Adv

'in a light, quiet manner'

(b) *läiskä-sti

IdPh-Adv

'in a loud, strong, splatting manner'

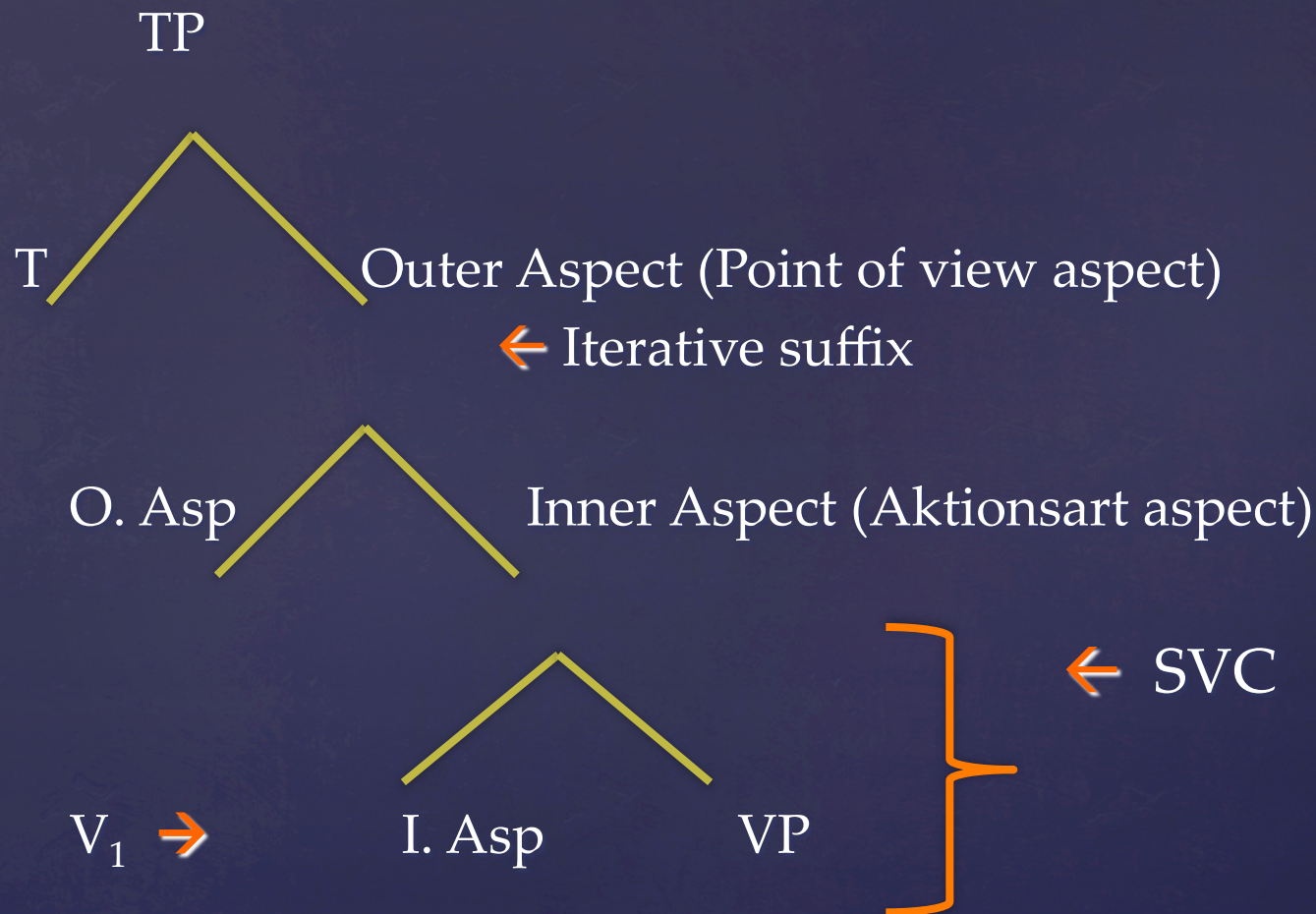
Apparent problem #2: why
V2 ≠ adverb?

- If V_1 is an Asp head, where is the iterative suffix hosted?

Seppä tako-a **kalskutt-ele-e**.
blacksmith hammer-ta.inf **IdPh-iterative-3sg**
'The blacksmith clangs repeatedly'

⌘ Iterative suffix is in the Outer Asp, while V_1 is in the Inner Asp; akin to secondary imperfectivization in some Slavic languages

**Apparent problem #3: why
iterative suffix?**



Apparent problem #3: why
iterative suffix?

Conclusions.
Further question
{

- SVC construction is productive in Finnish,
attested in
spoken/written language
formal/informal discourse
synchronic/diachronic data
- V_1 is Inner Asp(Aktionsart),
while V_2 is an ideophonic verb vague in its
Aktionsart

Conclusions

- How is productivity of SVC related to the lack of verbal root-root compounds in Finnish?
- How are Finnish SVC similar to/different from SVC constructions in other languages?
- How are ideophones used in other domains of Finnish grammar?

Further questions

⌘ How are variations of Aktionsart in SVC constructions related to the variation in aspectual interpretations in phrasal compound of Nouns?

kala-n + keitto
fish-gen + boiling
'fish-boiling'

kala + keitto
fish + boiling/soup
'fish soup'

Further questions

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Vancouveri-ssa **tihrutta-a** taas päiväkausi-a.

Vancouver-ine **IdPh-past.3sg** again day.period-part

‘It’s drizzling for days and days again in Vancouver’

Tuo-n nyt **tihrutta-a** läpi hetke-ssä.

that-acc now **IdPh-past.3sg** through moment-ine

‘One can surely squint through that in a moment’

Mies **tihrutta-a** pient-ä näyttö-ä päivän toisensa jälkeen.

man **IdPh-past.3sg** small-part screen-part day another after

‘The man squints at the small screen day after day’

**On it’s own, ideophone Aktionsart
specification is vague**

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Alternative accounts {

- Airola (2007: 91-92) points out that the CCs display semantic properties associated with SVCs
- However, she addresses V-V sequences that are coordinated with *ja* 'and'
- Our account is not limited to semantic properties:
 - we seek to reveal grammatical restrictions
- We specifically rule out any coordinated V-V

Jarva & Kytölä rule out the Finnish CC being a SVC for:

- (i) the use of an infinitive
- (ii) the particular descriptive function

Under our view, neither issue is a problem:

- (i) infinitive is a non-finite form citation
i.e., one-finite-form-per-SVC constraint is respected

- (ii) SVC may have a diversity of functions

cf. Aikhenvald 2006 and references therein

as long as the grammatical constraints are obeyed

Jarva & Kytölä 2007

- Lexical V appear in the lowest part of the tree
- Functional V pile up above the lexical V
- Despite being V morphologically, functional V realize functional heads: modality and aspect.

[FP1 [FP2 [FP3.... [VP]]]

But! The division is *not* binary.

Functional slots may host *quasi-functional* V that are causative, **motion**, and perception V

Assumptions